

Whatcom Council Of Governments

2002 Unified Planning Work Program Annual Narrative and Financial Report

This annual report details work completed between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002 in meeting Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and Washington State Department of Transportation planning requirements as set forth in United States Code of Federal Regulations and the Revised Code of Washington under the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the Washington State Growth Management Act.

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OVERVIEW

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Whatcom County Metropolitan Planning Area and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the region comprised of the entirety of Whatcom County.

This report provides a narrative summary of the work completed by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), under agreements with FHWA, FTA, and WSDOT, for the entire 2002 State Fiscal Year. Transportation planning work completed by WCOG was authorized and funded by FHWA, FTA and WSDOT for FY 2002, and organized in the 2002 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Individual goals identified in the 2002 UPWP are listed below along **with a narrative description of how each goal was met. Individual work tasks are organized in the same manner.**

Budgeted and expended amounts for each funding program for the 2002 fiscal year are reflected in **TABLE A**.

The 2002 UPWP was amended one time during the fiscal year to adjust PL funding amounts.

The figures in **TABLE A** have incorporated these amendments.

GOALS

The following goals comprised Whatcom Council of Governments' (WCOG's) focus for transportation work requiring expenditure of WCOG Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) resources during State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2002. *The italicized statements under each bullet reflect the year's achievements toward realizing the stated goals.*

- *Bring into current condition the WCOG Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans by October 2001.*

Public participation was a key factor in updating and upgrading the cited plans. A Whatcom Transportation Task Force was formed of the region's citizens and asked to devote substantial time and effort, along with support from WCOG staff, to revising and updating the plans. This goal was achieved with MPO and RTPO Policy Board adoption of a Combined Metropolitan and Regional Plan at their October 2001 meeting. Other methods of public participation were used including newsletter, mailings and web-site access.

- Complete steps to develop a WCOG regional transportation demand model. This effort will include the British Columbia lower mainland to forecast impacts from proposed development and forecast growth on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border.

Through a peer consultation process, the EMME/2 transportation-modeling platform was selected as most appropriate considering transportation demand imposed by the region's proximity to large population centers in British Columbia and Central Puget Sound. Best practice methodology for developing an intercity/regional model reflecting not only urban demand from large proximal urban centers, but also the much more rural Whatcom County and its cities was discussed and reviewed with technical representatives from local, state and federal agencies and other interested parties. Funding for the model development were identified and secured from federal and state sources (TEA-21 Section 1119, FHWA PL, and WSDOT). Negotiations were completed with Greater Vancouver (BC) Transportation Authority to purchase EMME/2 software and necessary licenses, and the purchase made. A draft scope of work was prepared to identify and retain a consultant qualified to assist in model development, and a WCOG staff individual was identified as the WCOG model technician. The technician attended the EMME/2 factory training program and user conferences as well as a basic travel demand modeling program of instruction.

- Continue work on various aspects and committees of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP).

WCOG continued work on WTP issues as long as funds were available.

- Integrate the WTP vision into local processes to the extent possible by aligning locally developed transportation solutions with WTP Outcome Statements, Service Objectives, Action Strategies and Performance Measures, as deemed appropriate by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) WTP staff.

WCOG staff worked with WSDOT staff to integrate WTP principles into local plans to the extent possible.

- Continue work on congestion relief leading to travel time reliability and reduced travel delay for people and freight by identifying and seeking implementation of transportation alternatives.

WCOG Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) staff conducted multiple workshops, training sessions and promotions for, and with, local business encouraging the use of transportation alternatives.

- Identify long-range commercial transportation needs and encourage multi-modal transportation planning.

Substantial work has been accomplished in this area over the last year. The Task Force working to update Metropolitan and Regional plans, MPO and RTPO Policy Boards, and the IMTC border stakeholder coalition identified transportation system and policy shortcomings contributing to delays and inefficiencies in commercial operations including impediments to greater utilization of multiple modes. Some solutions have been proposed and are being evaluated, while others are being implemented, such as Intelligent Transportation Systems integration into commercial operations and cross-border operations where border delays cost operators tens of millions of dollars annually.

- Continue work to implement State transportation concurrency requirements through local transportation planning processes.

WCOG staff worked with local jurisdictions in reviewing concurrency requirements, setting levels of service for local and non-HSS facilities, and ensuring consistency between local comprehensive plans and the Whatcom Transportation Plan.

- Provide a framework for coordinating transportation safety activities among appropriate government entities, "specialized transportation safety groups" and the private sector. Enhance transportation safety awareness among local officials and the public.

WCOG periodically briefed MPO and RTP Policy Board members and other parties concerning safety implications of transportation decisions. Project-level safety considerations were reviewed at the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) level.

- Coordinate with WSDOT's current work on an environmental streamlining process to facilitate compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Actions that would be applicable to maintenance, preservation and some transportation construction would be reviewed under best management practices (BMP) appropriate for defined geographic areas.

A WCOG staff member was assigned specifically to participate in committee fact-finding and deliberations concerning these issues. WSDOT progress in this area was monitored and any opportunities for participation and or progress on environmental streamlining were thoroughly discussed with TTAC members at monthly meetings.

- Advocate use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies in lieu of construction where applicable. Incorporate ITS strategies in long and short range planning efforts. Develop a regional ITS architecture complying with the National Architecture, and coordinating with existing and planned ITS implementation.

ITS strategies have been identified for both commercial and auto applications including development of a traffic control center; installation of fiber optic networks; coordination and funding of weigh-in-motion technology, transponder and electronic seal (e-seal) technology for commercial applications; and preliminary work on a Regional ITS architecture. WCOG has been involved in these projects both indirectly as a forum and a resource as well as directly as a source of funding and a staff support.

- Complete the 2003-2008 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) to accurately reflect the region's priorities and shifting funding sources.

The 2003-2008 Regional and Metropolitan TIPs were completed and submitted on time. A WCOG staff member, responsible for completing this annual action, received an award from the State Secretary of Transportation for the quality of his work (only one such award was presented).

- Continue long-range financial planning, including assessment of existing conditions, identification of future needs, and assessment of fiscal ability to meet future needs. Search for and identify new and innovative resources, actively seek and react quickly to

any new, diverted, or innovative funding sources as an agent, representative, or project lead for projects beneficial to the region.

WCOG has worked very hard at local, state and federal levels to identify, and to secure, funds for needed region-level projects both within and outside traditional MPO and RTPO funding sources. This work continues.

- Expand efforts to involve the public in meaningful and informed participation as part of the processes used to identify transportation-related needs, issues, and solutions and in accordance with adopted public participation policies. Attempt to include those that may have been under-served or under-represented in the past.

Planning activities associated with Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan updates (combined in the Whatcom Transportation Plan) provided ample opportunity for public participation as evidenced by a representative community task force having a significant and focal role in forming the text and intent of the Whatcom Transportation Plan. Additionally, the WCOG has participated rigorously in a broad community-wide process locally known as the "Transportation Summit." The summit has produced a plan for a Community advisory group that will consult frequently with the RTPO Policy Board, and be facilitated by WCOG staff.

- Increase efforts to broaden participation of the public in transportation planning development. Use Census 2000 as a tool to assess and deter potential for uneven distribution of adverse environmental impacts.

WCOG staff began, but did not complete, a process to re-write its Public Participation Policy to include greater participation opportunities and ways to involve those previously not heard in transportation planning efforts based on Census 2000. This work will be completed in FY 2003.

- Work to ensure integration of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance projects into other long- and short-range projects.

WCOG has acted as a resource to member jurisdictions by providing research services and advice concerning implementation of ADA requirements. People with disabilities were included in the Task Force formed to update the Whatcom Transportation Plan resulting in an effectively compliant plan.

- Develop information for use in a regional freight mobility study.

As part of a large-scale origin-destination study project undertaken as a result of the needs identification processes completed through the IMTC, freight and commodity movement through the region is better understood. Data generated, and associated analyses, from the cited work has been, and will continue to be, used in identifying long-term freight mobility needs and specific improvements such as dedicated freight routes, opportunities for modal shifting and facilities and services required for enhancement of freight movement efficiency.

- Forecast future financial resources to effect fiscally constrained long-range planning as part of review and revision of Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans.

WCOG completed a review of future revenues reasonably anticipated to be available to fulfill transportation-related needs in the next 20-year planning period. This work was completed as part of the Whatcom Transportation Plan update.

- Evaluate need for and recommend transit-, pedestrian-, passenger rail- and bicycle-friendly improvements as part of road-related transportation improvements associated with regional development patterns.

Through discussion at regular Transportation Technical Advisory Committee meetings, WCOG staff has consistently encouraged and promoted incorporation of non-motorized and transit friendly factors into standard road projects. Additional efforts have focused on mainstream trail projects adding to transportation alternatives available in the region. The Coast Millennium Trail and Chain of Trails projects are examples of this work.

- Maintain and enhance coordination between WCOG and WSDOT, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and other entities as directed by the MPO and RTPO Policy Boards.

WCOG maintains close ties with staff and leadership of State and Federal transportation agencies as well as the transportation authorities of adjoining jurisdictions including Canada, British Columbia, and municipalities on both sides of the U.S. – Canada border.

- Continue leading the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project (IMTC). Plan and develop a coordinated, all-weather, transportation infrastructure conjoining Washington State and British Columbia and providing effective and multi-modal access and mobility for people and goods including ITS technologies encouraging transportation efficiencies and travel delay reduction.

WCOG continues to lead and chair this effort and its associated standing and special purpose committees.

- Begin implementation of the Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for State Route 11 (Chuckanut Drive).

WCOG has made multiple attempts at capturing Scenic Byways funding for projects identified in the WCOG-prepared SR11 CMP. To date these attempts have not been successful, but efforts will continue in this area and other funding sources will be explored.

- Continue implementing the Mt. Baker Highway (State Route 542) Corridor Management Plan.

WCOG has several projects in progress implementing the SR 542 CMP.

- Make planning for emergency vehicle access an integral part of all long range planning efforts.

Emergency vehicle access provisions have been included in the updates of the Whatcom Transportation Plan.

WORK ELEMENTS

The 2002 WCOG UPWP is divided into seven Program Work Elements:

- 1) **Administration**
- 2) **Planning Documentation**
- 3) **MPO and RTPO Program Management**
- 4) **Transportation Modeling, Data Collection, and Technical Assistance**
- 5) **Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning**
- 6) **Other**
- 7) **Priority Un-funded Projects**

Each work element is addressed separately in this annual report. The description of specific work accomplished during the year, is preceded by a statement of purpose for each element, and followed by a list of work products resulting from the year's accomplishments.

Element I. Administration

Administration includes the record keeping, training, and the business of WCOG for activities relating to transportation planning.

Administrative support was provided by WCOG staff to manage and coordinate the 2002 Unified Planning Work Program, public participation, budget review, office administration, grant administration, and dissemination of records and documents to the public and to member and non-member jurisdictions. Appropriate federal and state financial records were kept and organized. All the above were accomplished within the guidelines and requirements of FHWA Title VI.

WCOG staff coordinated, facilitated, attended and summarized monthly, quarterly and annual meetings of the WCOG Executive Board (MPO Policy Board), the RTPO Policy Board, the WCOG Full Council and the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) and attended MPO/RTPO Coordinating Committee meetings.

WCOG staff members also participated in transportation-related meetings and events hosted by other agencies and organizations including various divisions of WSDOT, WTA, multi-county, multi-state, and international groups focused on transportation as well as the Bellingham-Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, and attended multiple state and federal legislative briefings.

WCOG continued in a leadership role administering the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project to facilitate cooperation and joint planning among U.S. and Canadian border related transportation interests. The Deputy Director and Project Manager led meetings of US - Canadian border stakeholders (the IMTC membership).

The Office Manager and Clerk of the Board prepared monthly and quarterly MPO and RTPO Policy Board meeting agendas and meeting summaries. The Transportation Planning Specialist attended, and completed summaries of, TTAC meetings.

Administration Work Products:

- Annual budget and necessary amendments
- Grant management and reporting
- Payroll and associated documentation
- Appropriate files and records accurately portraying staff transportation activities for the current year
- Communication with the public, elected officials, and staff of other organizations
- Staff reports, agendas and summaries of regular and special meetings
- Properly conducted staff, board, and technical meetings
- Annual Indirect Cost Plan
- Staff trained in current technical and funding issues

Element II. Planning Documentation

Planning documentation tasks demonstrate how state and federal requirements for the documentation of regional and urban transportation planning activities for required and optional MPO and RTPO tasks identified in the annual UPWP are met.

WCOG staff completed updating all sections of the region's Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans, combining those documents into a single plan: the Whatcom Transportation Plan.

WCOG staff worked with local jurisdictions to complete FY 2003-2008 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) in the prescribed format, combine the County and City TIPs into Metropolitan and Regional TIPs and submit them to WSDOT for inclusion into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

WCOG staff provided mapping services and transportation model information including traffic counts to local public and private organizations, officials and individuals for their own planning processes. A new Whatcom Traffic Count Manual reflecting the region's latest available traffic counts was developed, thoroughly reviewed, printed and distributed to interested parties. The 2003 UPWP was completed and adopted by the MPO Policy Board and an amendment to the 2002 UPWP was prepared and adopted.

WCOG is a U.S. Census affiliate and accordingly received and disseminated Census 2000 information and data. Staff also responded to requests for census data, demographics and census-based mapping services throughout the year.

International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project activities continued throughout the year with monthly steering committee, quarterly core group, and bi-annual general assembly meetings. WCOG staff led the IMTC organization through identification of

border infrastructure needs and coordinated cooperative, international partnerships and project teams to meet those needs.

Additionally, WCOG completed, adopted and processed amendments to the 2003 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (RTIP & MTIP) through TTAC, and through public hearings conducted by the respective Regional and Metropolitan WCOG boards. TIP amendment requests were coordinated with member jurisdictions, advertised, processed, approved and submitted according to state guidelines.

The WCOG Internet home page was improved to provide public access to information concerning all WCOG's transportation planning activities, products and project status.

Prioritized arrays of projects, eligible for funding under various federal and state programs, were developed, and funding was pursued to implement and complete many of those projects.

Planning Documentation Work Products:

- Transportation plans that are understandable and responsive to the citizens of the Metropolitan Planning Area and of the region
- Regional and Metropolitan TIPs comprised of regionally significant and financially constrained projects
- SFY 2003 UPWP
- Annual 2001 UPWP report
- Board-approved UPWP and TIP amendments including requisite public participation activities.
- Resolutions relating to the UPWP and to the MPO/RTPO structure
- Adequate and properly announced and conducted public meetings
- Required environmental documents
- Records of process associated with the IMTC Project, a well-coordinated forum for consideration of U.S. Canadian border issues, and identification and prioritization of needed border-related improvements in the region
- Grant applications for state and federal funding of projects of a regional nature consistent with regional and local plans

Element III. MPO and RTPO Program Management

This element reflects how state and federal requirements for completion of regionally oriented MPO and RTPO tasks and planning are met, and how WCOG acts as a coordinating body linking the interests and preferences of jurisdictions within the region as well as other federal, state and local agencies, and adjacent jurisdictions including Skagit County and British Columbia, Canada.

WCOG convened monthly Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) meetings with activities including TTAC recommendations to RTPO and MPO Policy Boards regarding TIP amendments, and other priority based actions. WCOG staff conducted an RTPO workshop to enhance local knowledge of RTPO responsibilities, requirements and tasks, and briefed legislators and local elected and appointed officials and their staff on MPO/RTPO-level transportation plans, planning and priorities. WCOG led and facilitated decision-making processes of MPO and RTPO Policy Boards including emerging transportation and related funding issues such as discussions of improved public participation in those processes and enhancement of local involvement in setting priorities.

WCOG combined jurisdictional (including WSDOT) Transportation Improvement Programs into Metropolitan and Regional TIPs (MTIP/RTIP), reviewed the MTIP/RTIP with the Whatcom Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and conducted a public hearing at which the MTIP and RTIP were approved by the MPO and RTPO Policy Boards, respectively, and subsequently forwarded to WSDOT for inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

WCOG responded efficiently and effectively to requests from local, state and federal agencies to amend Metropolitan and Regional TIPs and the UPWP as needed.

WCOG staff continued coordination of regional planning and project-level efforts to identify solutions for relieving delays of Canada-U.S. border crossing traffic including both auto and commercial traffic, and work toward implementation of those solutions. Although the IMTC project is clearly an MPO responsibility, most of the IMTC project funding comes from non-MPO/RTPO sources.

WCOG organized and facilitated meetings of Canadian, U.S., and Washington State agencies with a stake in border crossing issues. Continuation of this successful effort, entitled the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project, has been demonstrated to fill a needed role in regional cooperation and coordination of transportation planning and projects.

WCOG staff also worked to identify infrastructure and policy roadblocks to freight mobility by identifying needed mobility projects, new initiatives such as feasibility studies for modal shifts and other freight mobility alternatives. Finally, WCOG has coordinated some aspects of transportation planning such as I-5, SR9 and other regional issues, including transportation alternatives, with Skagit-Island RTPO through a four-county forum focused on reducing congestion by working to increase use of transportation alternatives.

One example of the work through the multi-county forum is a multi-county, grant-funded, effort to provide traveler information about all modes of transportation including bicycling, walking, and private and public providers through a series of traveler information kiosks placed at transportation crossroads. This project has progressed to the implementation stage this year.

MPO and RTPO Program Management Products:

- Well-managed TTAC, RTPO and MPO Policy Board activities, and decision-making processes
- Forums for discussion of regional transportation issues among local/regional jurisdictions and for increasing cooperation between adjacent jurisdictions including adjoining counties, and British Columbia, Canada
- Appropriate, effective and well-organized public meetings
- Regionally approved RTIP and MTIP
- RTP Guidelines and Principles
- Regional Transportation Strategies
- Efficient use of RTPO and MPO funding
- Completed data sets and research related to freight mobility

Element IV. Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance

Compile accurate and current transportation data suitable for use in updating the Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Plans. Provide current information for member jurisdictions and outside agencies requiring transportation information for the region.

The objective of this task is to make accurate and current transportation data available to member jurisdictions, WSDOT and to the public, and to provide technical planning assistance to agencies in the region desiring such assistance.

Progress has been made on development of a broad-based regional transportation demand forecasting model. EMME/2 software has been obtained and installed; a WCOG staff member has been assigned to model development, maintenance and operation. Draft scopes of work for consultant assistance in initial model setup have been written. The WCOG staff person has attended multiple formal and informal training sessions on the concept of traffic demand modeling, the EMME/2 software and newly evolving user-friendly adjunct software. Household survey methodology has been and continues to be evaluated for best practice solutions.

Through the International Mobility & Trade Corridor project, WCOG staff gathered, consolidated, and organized border related information for use by the local jurisdictions, WSDOT, FHWA, and other interested parties

The WCOG provided technical support and coordination for member jurisdictions on local and regional transportation issues including substantial assistance with proper TIP preparation.

Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance Products:

- Forums for reaching consensus on data-related regional transportation issues among local jurisdictions
- Appropriate public meetings and records of such proceedings
- Properly prepared jurisdictional Transportation Improvement Programs
- Regional Transportation Strategies
- Written and direct communications with member jurisdictions regarding state and federal transportation policy and funding
- Substantial progress on moving toward an effective regional, trans-border transportation demand model

Element V. Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning

Integration of public transportation considerations into the Regional Transportation Plan and, to the extent possible, in jurisdictions' land use plans. Cooperate with local public transportation providers in long and short range planning efforts and in implementation of ADA and Title VI requirements.

WCOG assisted WTA staff by serving on WTA's citizen advisory committee to respond to local citizens' concerns regarding ADA requirements as well as respond to concerns of local individuals and organizations regarding access to public transportation-related meetings.

WCOG staff completed 2002 TIP development and 2002 TIP amendments for Whatcom Transportation Authority.

WCOG staff participated in a four county forum (North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCC) focused on transportation alternatives including transit, rail, and other non-motorized modes.

The Deputy Director participated as a speaker in several national and regional transportation conferences this year including those sponsored by AASHTO, FHWA and the State of Texas. He also continued to work with Skagit-Island RTPO as well as British Columbia, Canada public transportation providers and their representatives to promote transit connections among adjacent counties and lower-mainland British Columbia. Further, substantial work was completed with the Cascadia Project of the Discovery Institute and a four-county consortium comprising the NSCC on regional non-motorized and public transportation initiatives including implementation of a project for a series of similar traveler information kiosks focusing on and providing schedule and other access information for public transit and other transportation alternatives.

Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning Products:

- Forums for discussion and recommendations on regional transportation issues among local jurisdictions
- Regional public transportation strategies

- Completed data sets and research related to public transportation and other transportation alternatives
- Began implementation of a series of traveler information kiosks offering information on access to multiple modes
- Began implementation of an evolving plan to provide cross-border transit and related connections
- Completed preliminary work necessary to begin implementation of the Coast Millenium Trail project

Element VI. Other

Other areas of MPO/RTPO activity reflect a regional demand based not on regulatory requirements, but more on regional need and opportunity for greater co-operation and potential partnerships for greater transportation efficiency. Planning support is frequently needed in these areas and is supported by MPO planning requirements and WSDOT RTPO guidelines.

Through the IMTC border stakeholder group, WCOG has identified and sought funding for U.S.-Canada border related projects aimed at improving freight and auto flow efficiency and preserving economic trade stability. These projects are held by border stakeholders to be important medium- and long-term solutions contributing to a more efficient overall border transportation dynamic.

Projects funded and underway in the Whatcom/Cascadia border region for FY 2002 included studies to establish and/or improve cross-border transit and rail transportation, system geometry and alignment improvement designs for the cities of Abbotsford, BC and Sumas, WA, an Advance Traveler Information Systems ATIS installation guiding travelers to less busy crossings, and installation of weigh-in- motion technology and electronic tracking systems to expedite commercial vehicle cross-border movement. The data and analyses resulting from some of this work is providing a backdrop for future border-related needs analyses as well establishing a prioritized and coordinated set of needed improvements for future work.

“Other” Products:

- Transportation planning support for regional projects
- An organized process for promoting integration of ITS technologies and methodologies into existing and future regional transportation planning
- Transportation alternatives for tourists and commuters
- A properly funded, organized and staffed method for defining cross-border traffic flows to provide a basis for future transportation and related decision making for the region
- Better informed travelers, enhanced safety and reduced congestion in border communities

- Integration of ITS technologies to enhance speed and efficiency for the flows of commercial vehicles crossing the Whatcom region's border with British Columbia, Canada

TABLE A

Table A. Synopsis of UPWP Budget for FY 02. Expenditures include local match and carry-forward unless noted otherwise.

Program (FHWA, FTA, RTPPO, etc.)	Amended UPWP Budget	Expenditures for SFY 2002	% Budget expended
FHWA PL / FTA	135,559	135,562	100%
WSDOT RTPPO	31,744	31,744	100%
RTPPO STP(R)	62,500	78,886	126%
Totals	229,803	246,192	107%